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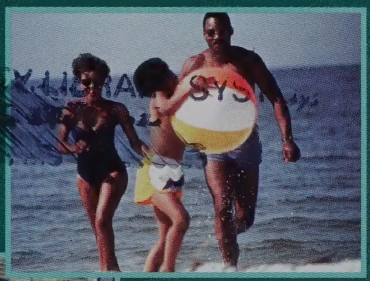

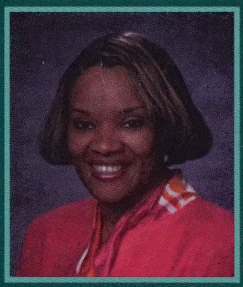

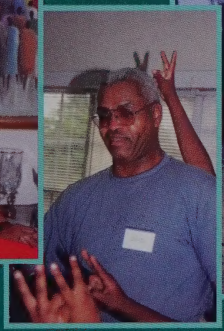

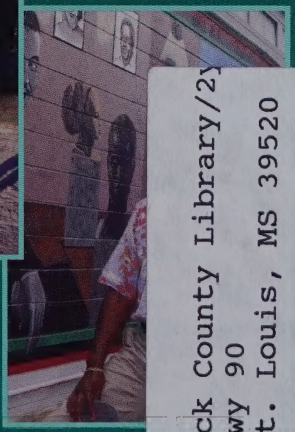

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Mississippi Star

VOL.2 NO. 11

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Publisher's Page

Glenda Singleton

Vacations offer the family the opportunity to enjoy time together having fun and learning new things about one another, develop new skills, and learn about new places and things. On a recent trip to Memphis, Tennessee, I thought I'd explore the typical haunts of the area to write a short vacation story on Memphis and Tunica, Mississippi.

Arriving in Memphis late on a Friday night, I decided to check out the night life created by the booming casino businesses in Tunica County, Mississippi, twenty minutes south of the city. What has grown up in the cotton fields off the banks of the Mississippi River are mammoth structures offering to excite the senses. From the thousands of lights and the clinking of the slot machines, business appears to be great in this corner of Mississippi.

But one cannot spend an entire weekend at the slots. So off the next morning, I went to tour the sights of the city of Memphis. There is the Pyramid which reminds the city of the ancient city sitting on the Nile after which Memphis is named. The pyramid is a structure to behold; it is 32 stories of stainless steel. The citizens of Memphis utilize this site for a variety of civic and social affairs.

The Beale Street district offers a variety of sights, sounds and foods to address and satisfy the senses. This area of course boasts being the birth place of the blues. And if blues music is what you truly enjoy, expect the very best. Local groups as well as famed blues artist grace the stages of the various restaurant clubs. There are art galleries and shops. Of course, the palaces of two popular kings are on the street. B.B. King's place is a down home authentic blues club and then there is the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley's place. Not far off of Beale Street is the W.C. Handy Museum. Handy is known as "the Father of the Blues" and the W.C. Handy Museum is the little wood frame house in which Handy first wrote what we know today as "blues music."

A visit to the area should include a paddlewheeler ride on the mighty Mississippi River. There are tours along the Mississippi River Wall to help visitors understand the rich history of the area and the impact of the river on the development of this area and the nation.

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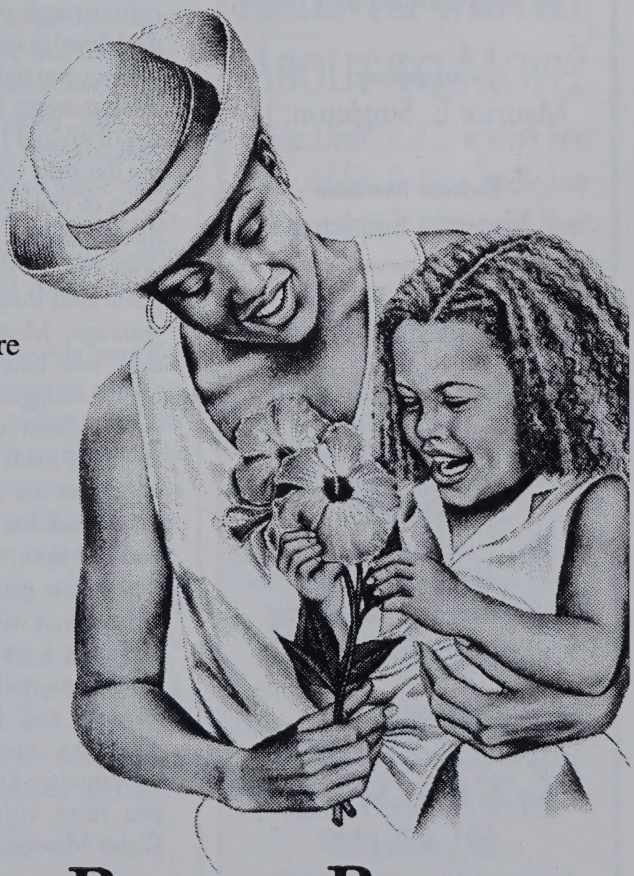

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Not far to the north of the city, in Henning, the family will enjoy visiting the Alex Haley House Museum. This is the home and burial site of Alex Haley, the author of Roots.

However, the most interesting and most worthwhile stop was at the National Civil Rights Museum. The Lorraine Hotel in which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stayed the day of his assassination has been converted to the most amazing multimedia, interactive presentation of the history of the civil rights struggle of African Americans in the United States. Some of the exhibits will put you right in the middle of the historic events that took place during the 1950's and 1960's. If you lived during this time you will relive the experiences of that time, including the fears, the hopes, the triumphs, the frustrations and the dreams that the participants lived through those short 30-40 years ago. More importantly, our children, who have difficulty understanding the struggles and the history of our race can learn to appreciate a good bit about the roads we have traveled to get where we are today. The Lorraine Hotel itself has an interesting history. You will find it hard to rush through the exhibits; plan to spend a good part of the day; it will be worth your visit.

This is a vacation opportunity for families to really spend quality time learning and having fun together. There are many other recreational opportunities for the entire family, but you must visit the National Civil Rights Museum.

Glenda Singleton works in human resources and a frequent contributor to Mississippi Star.

LETTERS

Dear Maurice,

The April 1998 edition of Mississippi Star featuring African American Families and Adoption by Calvin and Herta Smith was truly heart-warming and body chilling.

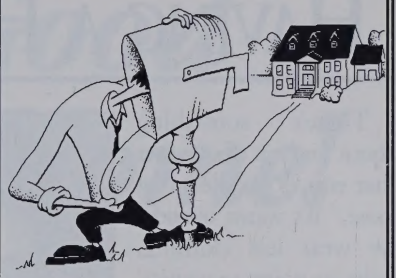
Having had the opportunity to visit with the family in Carrollton, Texas, I want your readers to imagine the joy, the happiness, the love, the caring and all of the feelings that swamped me by just being in their home and experiencing all of the emotions mentioned. Two happy little girls showered with love from morning to night, day after day.

"Let the little children come to me and forbid them not I say." (Luke 18:16) The Lord has blessed Calvin and Herta and He has most certainly blessed Paris and Cori.

This state and nationwide story has caught the eyes and attention of many. When Paris and Cori became the subject of conversation, you immediately see and feel the sentiment of those involved in the conversation. Eyes begin to fill with tears of joy and sadness. Chill bumps rise on arms, and the words follow - "That is beautiful." "That is a blessing." "God is so good." "How remarkable!" I have heard and I have seen many reactions.

To my brother and his family, may God continue to bless you and your family for years to come.

Marilyn Smith
Bay St. Louis, MS



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should be 100 words or less.

Star Calendar: Events of interest to South Mississippians should be submitted on your organization's letterhead, specifying the date, time, place of event and a number of contact. Submissions should be received by the twentieth day of the preceding month.
Be sure to include a daytime telephone number.

Mail submissions to
Mississippi Star, P.O. Box 2651,
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reserves the right to refuse or decline to publish any submission.

Having a Hot Summer?

by Stacy James Mackey

There's something about the heat of summer that entices people to let loose. It's warm outside, we wear less clothing, folks are going to picnics, they're barbecuing, swimming, hanging out at the beach, having fish frys, visiting with friends and family, taking trips and more. The kids are out of school, you've put in for some time off from work and like many folks, you take a much needed vacation. Your family reunion is this month, your high school reunion is next month and you have to take the children to visit their grandparents. Summer just takes us out of our normal routines. Summer also has a tendency of taking us away from our normal quiet time with God.

When we lose that precious time with God, we're probably praying less and when we're praying less, we're vulnerable. That's when Satan steps in to turn up the gas on us. If you're sweating about something and its not because of the sweltering humidity outside, think about the time you're spending with God.

It's easy to let summertime with God slip away when you're waking up away from home in a strange hotel room. The kids are complaining they have nothing to do (Vacation Bible School was only one week). You're cooking for relatives that are sleeping on your couch. Wherever you find yourself, take the peace, comfort and protection of the Holy Spirit with you. Don't take a vacation away from God. Make time for Him because He always makes time for us. Hebrews 13:5 assures of of His promise "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Learn to travel with a pocket or small purse-size Bible so that your summer vacation won't interrupt your daily worship.

The weather forecasters will tell you that we are experiencing one of the hottest summers. Heat records are being set across the nation. Don't let the flames of summer that you're feeling be because Satan is brewing you for the sizzle of his home. Let the flames be because you are burning a fire for Christ that just can't be put out. In the words of the "revived and now testifying" rapper MC Hammer, tell Satan even he "Can't Touch This!" I hope I've given you something to pray about.

Stacy James Mackey is a local columnist and a frequent contributor to Mississippi Star. Send responses to Mississippi Star, P.O. Box 2651, Bay St. Louis, MS 39521.

Something To Pray About

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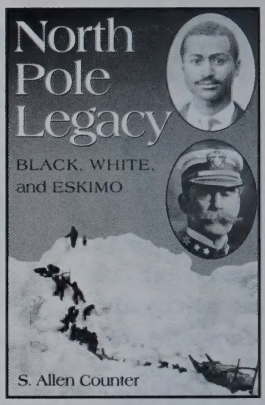
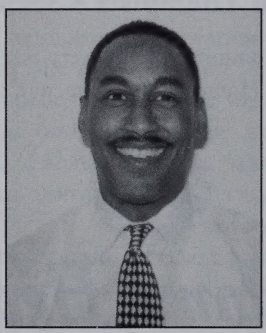
NORTH POLE LEGACY: *Black, White and Eskimo*



North Pole Legacy: Black, White and Eskimo (University of Massachusetts Press 1991) is truly a gripping account of the finding of eighty year old sons of Matthew Henson and Robert Peary. In 1986, while on a professional visit to Sweden, Dr. S. Allen Counter, Harvard neuroscientist, explorer and Director of The Harvard Foundation, heard of several families of dark-skinned eskimos in Northern Greenland. Intrigued by this, and being an explorer himself, Counter traveled to the northernmost settlements in Greenland on a scientific mission and discovered Peary's and Henson's eighty year-old sons - fathered by Polar Eskimo women - and their descendants during the1906 expedition.



Eric Labat

Counter later located descendants of Henson's siblings living in the United States. After bringing the existence of these men to international attention, Dr. Counter enabled them to fulfill their life-long dream of visiting the birth and resting places of their respective fathers and meeting their American relatives.

North Pole Legacy describes how Dr. Counter brought Anaukaq Henson and Kali Peary, and members of their families to the United States for their first visit on May 29, 1987. During their eleven-day visit, dubbed the "North Pole Family Reunion," each son laid a wreath at his father's grave site and met his American relatives for the first time. They received numerous tributes, including a personal message from the President of the United States, a proclamation from the Mayor of Washington, D.C., declaring June 3, 1987 Matthew Henson Day, a Service of Welcome at Harvard's Memorial Church and New York's Abyssinian Baptist Church, and an honorary banquet hosted by the President of Harvard.

Robert E. Peary was buried with full honors in an impressive monument at Arlington National Cemetery

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in 1920. Because of their forty-three year relationship, Matthew Henson visited Peary's gravesite every year. In contrast, Matthew Henson, master Arctic explorer, most-loved by the Eskimos, was buried in 1955 in a simple grave at Woodlawn Cemetery in New York. In 1986, Dr. Counter petitioned the president of the United States for permission to transfer the remains of Matthew A. Henson and his wife Lucy Ross Henson from Woodlawn Cemetery to their rightful place among other American heroes in Arlington National Cemetery.

On April 6, 1988, the 79th Anniversary of the North Pole discovery, Matthew Henson and his wife Lucy Ross Henson were reinterred with full military honors and a fitting new monument next to Robert and Josephine Peary in Arlington National Cemetery.

Henson had no children by his American wives, but his Eskimo descendants made the long journey to the United States by dogsled, military and commercial aircraft, and were present at Henson's reinterment ceremony along with his lateral American descendants.

Eric Labat is an oceanographer for the Naval Oceanographic Office at Stennis Space Center, Mississippi. His knowledge of Matthew Henson was sparked when the U.S. Navy named one of their latest multipurpose oceanographic survey vessels, the United States Naval Ship Henson.

For Additional information about Matthew A. Henson, visit the website at www.matthewhenson.com.

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Virginia Jones

A Bay St. Louis lady known for her service to people in need was honored by the community recently with a surprise retirement party. Approximately 400 family members and friends joined Mrs. Virginia Jones at Martin Luther King Park in Bay St. Louis on Saturday, May 23, to celebrate the end of a thirty-year career that spanned four decades.

"Ms. Virginia" as she is called by everyone in Bay St. Louis, was the first African-American to work in the food service area of the Bay-Waveland School District when she started there eighteen years ago. Prior to that she spent twelve years as a cook with the Headstart program.

Ms. Virginia was showered with gifts, plaques and money from friends, families and co-workers. And, the following Friday, she was honored again, this time with a luncheon at Casino Magic in Bay St. Louis hosted by the Bay-Waveland School District.

"They looked up to me at the school," Ms. Virginia says about the many students who have come through the cafeteria line at Bay High School. "Sometimes I would be down in the dumps and they would walk through that line, and they would make my day. One might come through and say 'smile Ms. Virginia.' They cared about me.

"They always looked for the brownies and cobblers and hot buttered rolls," she recalled some of the students' favorites. "They have come to me for a glass of water to take a Tylenol for their headaches. Even the teachers would come to me. Whenever the grandparents would come to see about their children in trouble, the teachers would come to me for me to handle the problems."

As she looked back over the thirty years she spent as a cook, Ms. Virginia

Ms. Virginia surrounded by the plaques and certificates of recognition she received.

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What should I do?
Perform monthly self-examinations, and make sure your doctor gives you a breast examination once a year. Mammography can detect breast cancer up to two years before you or your doctor can feel a lump. So, once you turn 40, have a mammogram every year.

For more information or a physician referral call:
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recalled tough times, but she never focused on her own problems. She always believed that her responsibility was to help others.

"There were plenty of sick people that needed to be taken care of. I was there when they needed me." She recalled taking care of a sick friend in the hospital in Jackson and leaving Jackson at 2:00 in the morning so that she would be at Headstart in Bay St. Louis at seven - without sleep.

"During that same time I was taking care of my grandmother and my father," she recalled. "I felt that by helping people that one day when my kids might need help, that the Lord would see fit that somebody would take care of my kids.

"It was hard," she says of raising six children as a single parent after the death of her husband, "but we survived."

Ms Virginia took on a second job as a cook at the Diamondhead Country Club, and some of the older kids worked to help maintain the home. "George (oldest son) went to the service and went to Viet Nam to help support the family" she recalled. "By me working, struggling, I still found time to help the sick in Bay St. Louis.

"And I still do it," she explained. "I feel like it is a duty I have to do; when they call me I can't say no."

Retirement will allow her plenty of time to help those in the community who depend on her. There should be plenty of time for other things she enjoy doing as well. How will she spend her free time?

"I'm going to get my reel and rod and go fishing." Her twenty grandchildren and seven great grandchildren are going to help see to that.

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SOUTH MISSISSIPPI: An Oasis of Fun and Recreation

by Maurice E. Singleton, Jr.

You can't say that you are bored or have nothing to do in South Mississippi and be taken seriously. Especially if you live here. If you can't find something interesting to do along the Gulf Coast, I suggest you get in your car, get on either Highway 90 or Interstate 10 and follow any vehicle with a Louisiana or Alabama license plate. They know what to do and where to go.

Whether it's family recreation or night time recreation for adults, the Coast has an abundance of fun and recreational opportunities within short or reasonable driving distances from anywhere. For starters, the beaches offer an array of fun possibilities, from wading and sunbathing to boating, parasailing and jet-skiing to fishing and crabbing.

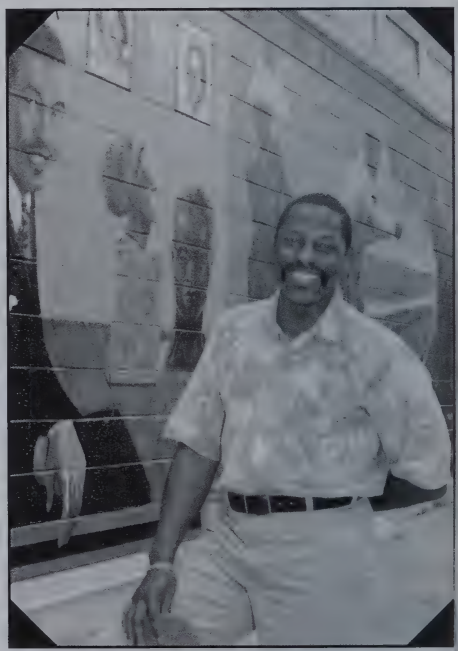
There are miles and miles of beautiful sand beaches along the Coast to accommodate local families as well as the many weekenders from Louisiana and other neighboring states. Several state parks also offer nice sand beaches with marked wading areas and life guards. And for adventurous families who might want to combine a day at the beach with a relaxing boat ride, Ship Island is a convenient getaway approximately an hour away with crystal waters and acres and acres of sand beaches.

Marine Life is a great family entertainment stop, where dolphins and sea lions put on quite a show. Several amusement parks and water parks offer thrill rides for children and daring adults. Many of the local churches host annual fairs with rides. There seems to be at least one going on every weekend during the summer months.

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI: An

Charter boat takes fishermen out for a day of deep sea fishing.

Golf opportunities are endless with new courses being developed.

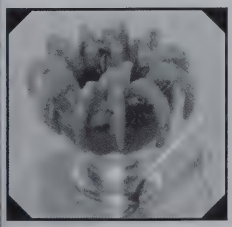


Artist Joseph L. Pearson stands in front of mural he painted in downtown Bay St. Louis.

sis of Fun and Recreation

Casinos offer around-the-clock gaming and entertainment.

Stennis Space Center in Hancock County is interesting and educational.



MY CARIBBEAN LULLABY

by Ruth W. Johnson

Her words waft on the breeze
evoking limpid, emerald Seas.
Gentle and wild, the limerick they swell
Soca and Punta and people they tell.

She tells of swain and ladies, gallant and fair
who clandestinely rendezvous nearby the pier.
Ardent embrace, who sees, who cares?
Night sea remembers, but only moon stares.

Seawall for bed, lapping waves song
fuel tropical passion the whole night long.
Breakers rise and fall, love's music enflame
spurious promise banish false shame.

A single-eyed sky spies near the night-clothed sea
remember, and remembering trysts so free.
She sings the songs of long, long ago
changing me, lifting me, loving me so.

Her music beats in my heart long past the song's hush
enlivening my soul to endeavor, not blush.
The sea, the moon, the sun and the rain
people her story and flow in my veins.

My sister, brother and I were suckled on Belizean lore all our lives. Its influence exerts itself in my writing as well as in my cultural orientation. We've traveled extensively, but I love the fecund flora, unique fauna and mellifluous denizen that are Belize. Mama was a wonderful storyteller. She was gifted with a rich heritage which has blessed our lives.

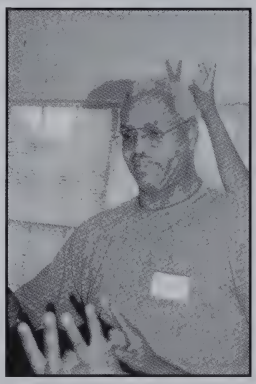
As a girl, people often asked me, "Uhmm, Ruthann Why yo' Mama talk so funny?"

I didn't understand, because Mama talked just fine to me. Her speech was full of music, but I heard no accent. Yet, I was chagrined by the inference that I was 'different.'

Today, I'm so proud of the heritage Mama added to the recipe that is uniquely and remarkably me.

New Mississippians

The Mississippi Gulf Coast has for some time been a nice place to go to get away for the weekend. For many, it has been a place to spend the summer, a short vacation or retreat. For more and more people, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is becoming home. Over the next several issues, we'll be talking with new Mississippians about what they think of this area and their contributions to the communities they inhabit. In Part One of this series, we bring the stories of two retired couples who have relocated to Waveland and Bay St. Louis.



Bill Johnson

Donna Holton

Bill Johnson and Donna Holton may be retired, but their schedules are as busy as ever.

The two of them have become quite involved in community activities and issues in Hancock County while maintaining involvements in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Bill is assistant director of the Save Our Children Center in Bay St. Louis, a program that provides after school tutoring and a summer day camp for children. Donna also does volunteer work at the Save Our Children Center as well as at the Mississippi Employment Office, the local high school and the Mississippi Welcome Center in Hancock County.

"We're busy, but we are very, very happy," explained Donna. "I was taught to help people. My mom use to tell us that we were put here to 'help people,' otherwise you are just taking up space.

"I have remembered that, and I feel good. It gives me energy to help people and to share what I have with other people, because I have had a rather privileged life."

Donna retired from a twenty-eight year career with the Internal Revenue Service. Bill retired from Southern University in Baton Rouge where he spent thirty-six and a half years as a political science professor. They have bought a home in Waveland and are restoring it.

"When we came here, we didn't know anybody," explained Donna, who was appointed membership chair of the Hancock County Branch of the NAACP at the first meeting she attended shortly after moving to Waveland last August. And this was just the beginning. Several months later, the local NAACP Branch enjoyed the success of one of the best attended Mother of the Year Supper Theater programs. Donna was co-chairperson.

"It's time to enjoy myself," said Donna who had been somewhat prohibited from getting involved in community issues and politics while employed with the IRS. "I had to be very careful even with some community projects."

For Bill, the issues and the area weren't entirely new. He was stationed at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi during the Korean War while he trained for six months to become a radio operator in1953. "We knew something about the area. Coming back I could see remarkable changes had been made," he compared the current times to 1953 when segregation was law. "When I was here in the Air Force, we were limited as to what we could do in terms of going to the beach and things of that nature."

And, in addition to the changes, another very noticeable quality is also very appealing to Bill. "People are very cordial here.. When you go to K-Mart, they wave to you. People are courteous and cordial. I am not used to that coming from the city. Here, we have small town values minus the big city problems...crime, pollution. Yet, we still have access to the culture and to our friends in Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

"Waveland is strategically located for us," Bill added. "There are some shortcomings, but I think the shortcomings are minor."

"We enjoy this area," Donna added. "I knew that I wanted to get involved in community affairs, and the people here were very, very nice. And I think that I have been received very graciously.

"We still have part of our roots in Louisiana, but we've decided this is it. We have no regrets because we are close enough to continue our activities and club associations in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

"We love our music, Jazz and blues," explained Donna. "We are not couch potatoes. We love to get out and do stuff. I must be involved. There are so many things to do. That is basically my life. We enjoy doing a lot of interesting things. Yet, we know when we are somewhat burned out, and we rest in order to get enough energy to do other things."

One of Donna's hobbies is gardening, and she enjoys finding flowers and plants to compliment their spacious yard. They also enjoy reading, traveling and entertaining.

"All of our friends and families enjoy coming here," she said. "Our lives are busy and enjoyable. We truly enjoy it."

Bill and Donna met fourteen years ago when she was on an IRS assignment in Baton Rouge. Both are single parents, and between the two of them have raised four children and put them all through college. The two of them sponsor a scholarship in the name of their son who died suddenly, six days after receiving his law degree from the University of Michigan.

• • • • • • • • •

Another couple to retire and move to Hancock County after living in Louisiana is Winston and Lois Vaz. They moved to Bay St. Louis in August of 1995 after spending twenty-six years in New Orleans.

"I enjoy Bay st. Louis because it's small and quiet at night," said Winston, a retired educator and predecessor to Johnson as the assistant director of Save Our Children Center. "It's peaceful. Unlike New Orleans, where you could hear gunshots every night. Bay St. Louis gives me peace and tranquility.

"To be honest about it, I never thought I would live in the state of Mississippi," explained Winston. "I had lived in that rat race, that fast life for so long. Once I came here, I enjoyed being here."

Winston says that he has always been motivated to help young people develop. He had been a teacher, a coach, assistant principal and prior to moving to Louisiana, a college recruiter at Indiana

University. Many of the young people he coached or counseled over the years have gone on to attain some level of success.

He has memorabilia from well-recognized national personalities in his office, some letters thanking him for his "caring" about them when it seemed not many others did.

Working with young people has been Winston's niche. "Young people keep you young," he explained. "They keep you thinking young." Looking at the walls of his office, it becomes quite obvious that Winston has had a positive impact on many young lives through coaching, teaching and mentoring. He admits, however, that it is frustrating when you can't reach a child, and despite your efforts they follow the wrong road.

"The thing that disturbed me mostly," he explained was having eleven boys he worked with over the years get killed "in the streets" of New Orleans. "And that took its toll on me. I could no longer tolerate that violent world."

And so, the Vaz's moved into a home they had been caring for several years before making it their home, driving over to Bay St. Louis twice a month to mow the yard and check on the house.

"This house had been just sitting here,." said Winston. "It was not occupied. One day I asked my wife how would she like to live in Bay St. Louis?"

"I said yes," said Lois who had retired from Orleans Parish Public Schools in 1990 and now lives in the house of her father's birth.

"The people here are friendly and courteous," she said. "And respectful and helpful. Bay St. Louis is a nice place to retire and enjoy the rest of your life."

And it also allowed Winston to continue what he has always enjoyed doing: helping and supporting young people.

Winston & Lois Vaz

"Working with the children in Bay St. Louis was much different than working with the children in New Orleans," he said. "The children here would listen to you. You have to put yourself in the role of that child: How would you like to be treated? Certainly there were some kids with behavioral problems, but you have to deal with it. The children are the same all over the United States because of TV and other things. Some are more mannerable and some are not.

"And you get closer to some of them," he explained. "I had two or three (at Save Our Children Center) that I wanted to make sure that they made their grades and that they achieved their goals."

Winston Vaz is currently working as a bailiff for the circuit court and with the Hancock County Board of Supervisors. Lois volunteers at her church and enjoys exercise walking and assembling jigsaw puzzles. They have two children and three grandchildren. Their daughter Kim is an associate professor of women's studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Their son Winston is a computer programmer in the satellite industry and lives in Tracy, California.

Teen is Ready for Yale Medical School

by Jeanie Lunsford

Claretha Nichols, from Moss Point, conducts an experiment to determine the cost of cleaning waste water at First Chemical Corporation. A former Moss Point High School valedictorian and a straight-A student in USM's biochemistry department, Nichols worked at First Chemical to earn the money to fly to Yale University for the summer. Yale offered Nichols a full-scholarship to attend a special six-week summer program for students planning careers in medicine, but it was First Chemical's support that helped get her there.

Nineteen-year-old Claretha Nichols will be a sophomore at the University of Southern Mississippi in the fall, but over the summer break she'll study medicine at Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut.

Nichols received a full scholarship and stipend to attend Yale's Minority Medical Education Program, from June 19 to July 31, 1998. Moss Point High School's 1997 valedictorian and a USM pre-med/biochemistry student with a 4.0 grade point average, Nichols already has a jump start on academic success. But she is eager to ensure her future, and attendance at this prestigious Yale summer program can dramatically increase the chance of acceptance into medical school. The six-week course includes a general overview of chemistry, the study of skeletal and muscular systems, and an introduction to DNA and cloning

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research.

The only catch is getting there. "I started checking on flights and discovered they were very expensive," said Nichols. Undaunted, she began looking for a temporary job that would pay enough to cover the plane trip.

Friends from Moss Point School District, aware of Nichols' outstanding academic potential, mentioned the problem to Harold Holder, the employee and public relations manager for First Chemical Corporation.

Holder was impressed with Nichols' academic achievements and her determination to squeeze more work into the short time available between the end of spring semester and mid-June when the Yale program began.

Holder offered Nichols a temporary job assisting research chemists John Fleming III and Amy Bearson at First Chemical Corporation. So instead of working as a camp counselor or flipping burgers — the kind of summer jobs most college students are offered — Nichols had the chance to advance her scientific knowledge while earning enough to pay for her plane ticket to Yale.

During her time at First Chemical Corporation, Nichols helped the chemists perform analytical tests, nitration reactions and carbo isotherms, and helped these scientists determine the cost of cleaning waste water created through chemical production. She also assisted with data entry, lab clean up and other aspects of a chemist's typical day.

First Chemical Corporation hires college students as interns every summer. According to Fleming, the chance to experience a working lab helps students make informed decisions about the future. It helps them decide "what they are going to do with their God-given talent," said Fleming. "Hopefully, when they come to First Chemical it helps them make decisions."

Nichols is the youngest they've ever had, Fleming said. She may also be the most focused. As appreciative as she is of the experience and help she's received from First Chemical, Nichols says she doesn't plan to become a chemist. She remains focused on a career in medicine. And that's just fine with the folks at First Chemical.

According to Holder, First Chemical Corporation is a strong supporter of all education. "Because it is a Mississippi-based organization, First Chemical has made it a policy to be supportive of local schools...it's important, because education is the future," said Holder.

"We consider it an honor to be able to help Claretha go to this (Yale) program," said Holder. "The folks in the lab are enjoying working with her and enjoying being a part of what's going on in her life. We suspect she'll be doing some great things in the future, and we're pleased to be a part of her development."

Jeanie Lunsford is the Communications Director for Moss Point Schools and a frequent contributor to Mississippi Star.

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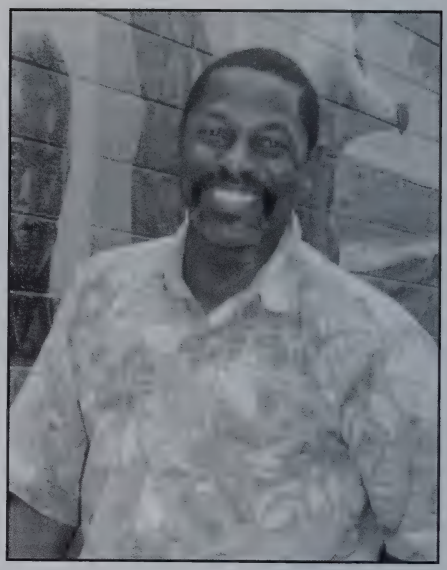
GUEST WORD

Self-Esteem Through the Arts

by Joseph A. Pearson



When I was asked to do a piece for the GUEST WORD section of this exceptional publication there was no hesitancy as to what my subject would be. The question for me was from which direction do I come at this most enigmatic and misunderstood entity of our society, art. But upon a moment's reflection, it occurred to me to share my thoughts relative to the needs of our young people and society at large regarding self-esteem.

Art for me has always been about communication. Communication on the deepest level, heart to heart. Being extremely shy as a child I suffered from what a lot of us, especially our kids suffer from today, low self-esteem. Art allowed me the vehicle to express my deepest feelings and thoughts from a nonthreatening position, that is, having placed my drawings or my writings in the hands of the person, I could be someplace else, avoiding seeing my feelings laughed at. It was most encouraging to find that what I'd said through my drawings touched what the other person was feeling.

> Participating in the arts allows the child to succeed. Success builds confidence. Confidence in ourselves encourages the expression of our own uniqueness. It is through the expressing of that uniqueness that we contribute toward the needs of others.

Though I am no longer a shy little kid, I long ago came to realize that the ability to tap into the emotions of others through my art is my calling, it is my purpose for being. With this realization came the need to share in meeting the needs of society that is plagued with the social ills born

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of this malady called low self image. According to Mississippi Arts Commission studies, low self image is the primary source for increases in school dropouts, teen pregnancies, low grades, and gang memberships. These tendencies are seen as a means to meet the needs to belong and feel a part.

The converse of this is an increase in graduation rates, better grades and a lesser tendency toward early pregnancies and gang activities when students are able to participate in art activities over a period of time. This includes drama, creative writing, music, dance, photography, and of course drawing.

Participating in the arts allows the child to succeed. Success builds confidence. Confidence in ourselves encourages the expression of our own uniqueness. It is through the expressing of that uniqueness that we contribute toward the needs of others. The Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the body in addressing how we as the body of Christ are to meet the needs of each other through our differences. He says no one part of the body can say it has no need for the other because all parts of the body, though different, serves a function vital to the whole of the body. Having the confidence to express our own individuality (positively speaking of course), we gain through having our needs met as we meet the needs of others. It is in giving that we receive.

Realizing that, while art is not a

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panacea, it has been proven effective in offsetting these negative trends. So, why is there not more support of the arts? One suggestion is, as alluded to above, art is misunderstood. There are many who fail to see it as "important". Some see it as something only for the "elite" of society. The truth is art is for and about everyone. Art is a reflection of society's morals, trends and attitudes.

The fact is there is an artist in all of us. Having been created in the image of the Master Creator, the need for creative self expression is innate, it comes with the territory. Studies by Rhoda Kellog many years ago discovered that when a drawing instrument and paper were placed before an 18-month old child it would begin to express itself through drawing. When that need is inhibited for whatever reasons from positive expression, it, out of necessity, will give vent to negative expressions.

While art is not a panacea, when we encourage our young people to positive expressions through the arts, we contribute much to the development of a well-rounded productive member of society whose contributions all of us will gain from.

Joseph A. Pearson is an accomplished portrait painter and creator of DIF (Drawing Is Fun-n-Mental) drawing workshop. Presently, Serenity in Bay St. Louis is displaying a series of Pearson's paintings called, Body Parts.

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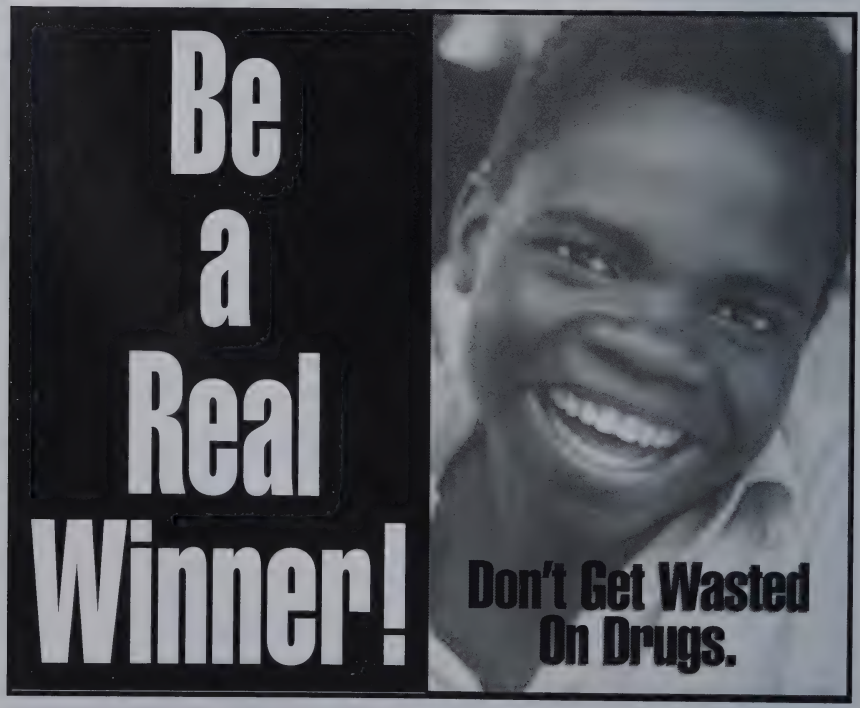

Midcalf Announces Candidacy for Judgeship

Harrison County Supervisor, Robin Alfred Midcalf, recently announced her candidacy for County Court Judge for Harrison County, Place Two. Midcalf is a life-long resident of Gulfport, Mississippi. She attended Harrison Central High School and went on to further her education at Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior college, Jefferson Davis Campus, William Carey College, and ultimately graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law in May of 1988. She passed the bar exam in February, 1988, a few months before graduating.

Ms. Midcalf wants to make the County even more viable than it is today. Effective July 1, 1998, Code Section 9-9-21 has been amended to raise the jurisdictional amount for County Courts from $50,000 to $75,000. This means more civil cases will be heard in County Court.

"I am ready to work to dispose of these cases and others that can be transferred from Circuit Court," said Midcalf. "I am committed to serving my community and the people of this wonderful County. For the past ten years, I have had the opportunity to represent a number of clients (both civil and criminal) on a wide range of issues. I have also had the opportunity to work with law enforcement officers, long before going to law school.

"I have even had the unique experience of working in the District Attorney's office prior to my law school experience. Also, prior to taking office as County Supervisor, I worked as a part-time public defender for Harrison County. So, as you can see, I have had a diverse spectrum of experiences, all of which will enable me to be the kind of Judge every citizen in Harrison County can be proud to claim."

Ms. Midcalf is serving in her second term as Harrison County Supervisor. She points out that she is elected in District Four but that she represents the entire Harrison County because her votes on the Board impact every citizen in Harrison County.

Ms. Midcalf is divorced and a proud parent of one daughter, Ebony Nicole Midcalf, a sophomore at Mississippi State University. She has served on numerous boards and committees. She is a member of the Mississippi Bar Association, Harrison County Bar Association, Mississippi Association of Supervisors, and the Education Committee of the Mississippi Association of Supervisors.

She is a past member of the United Way of South Mississippi Board of Directors; past Leadership Gulf Coast Board of Trustees member; member of Class 1991 -1992 Leadership Gulf Coast; a member of Leadership Mississippi, 1993 - 1994; and a member of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Area Chamber of Commerce. She currently serves as a member of the Values + Education = Success, Inc. (VES) Board of Directors, a mentoring program of which she was co-founder. She also serves on the Girls Scouts Gulf Pines Council Board of Directors.

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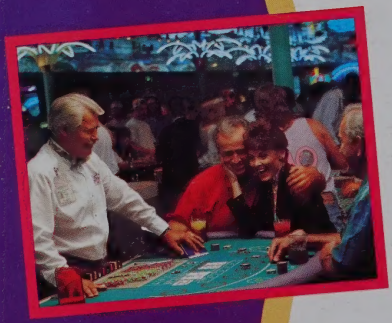

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